

201297



Courier-News 6/3/97

S. Plainfield wants toxic soil cleaned

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SOUTH PLAINFIELD — Borough officials are calling for the federal government to clean up contamination at a local industrial site.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals have been found in the soil at the Hamilton Industrial Park, home to 15 businesses.

The Cornell-Dubilier Co. operated at the site from 1936 to 1962, manufacturing capacitors and electronic

components. A tributary of the Bound Brook is on the 25-acre site.

PCBs have been shown to cause cancer in laboratory animals and can lead to birth defects.

Assemblyman Bob Smith, D-Piscataway, said high levels of PCBs have been found in the interiors of some of the buildings. He said he was worried the contamination could end up in the Bound Brook and go two miles downstream to New Market Lake in Piscataway. The water then flows past Middlesex Borough and the town of Bound Brook before it emp-

ties into the Raritan River.

"I want to know if PCBs are coming off the site," Smith said, especially since fishing is popular in the lake.

Eric Wilson, the on-site coordinator for the Environmental Protection Agency, said the agency plans to collect samples later this month "to assess potential risks to health and the environment" and to see if PCBs and other chemicals have moved downstream.

Once the results are known, he said, "We will share them with public health agencies and local health de-

partments," adding any decision on brook and lake access would not be "a unilateral decision."

Fish samples will also be taken, Wilson said.

To stabilize the site, he said, driveways will be paved to keep dust from spreading. Drainage controls will be implemented to limit migration of contaminants.

EPA officials in New York City said the site has not yet been placed on the National Priorities List. Such a listing would make it eligible for a long-term cleanup.